MARVEL COMICS
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A storm is coming.

A tempest that will topple a government, enslave a nation and rock the very foundation of 2099. The present will be erased, the past rewritten and the future undone. Many will die. Many more will pray for death.

On the eve of destruction, the last heroes of a condemned nation—Spider-Man, Punisher, Ghost Rider, Hulk and the X-Men—enter the heart of the maelstrom to battle a foe they believe to be their deadliest yet. They are wrong. For in the eye of this storm, is Doom.

Welcome to,

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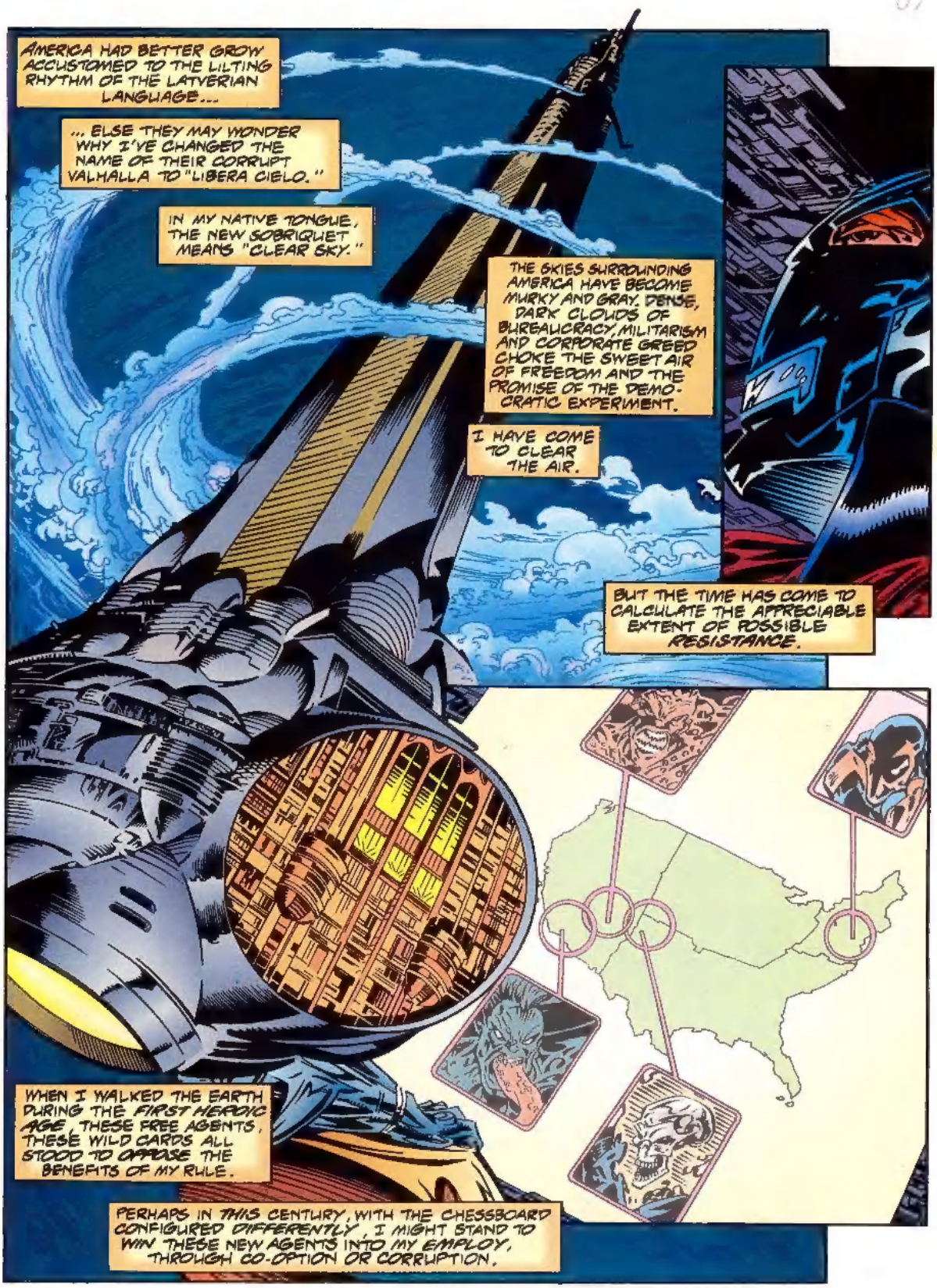
Thank you: Matt Morra, for his infinite wisdom, support and sense of melodrama, Joey Cavalieri, for giving me the reigns, Jimmy Palmiotti, for the guilt trip, Joe Quesada, for his guilty conscience, Angus McKie, Marc Campos, Steve Dutro, Ed Lazellari, and John Bligh, for patiently waiting on all those stats.


AMERICA HAD BETTER GROW ACCUSTOMED TO THE LILTING RHYTHM OF THE LATVERIAN LANGUAGE...
... ELSE THEY MAY WONDER WHY I'VE CHANGED THE NAME OF THEIR CORRUPT VALHALLA TO "LIBERA CIELO."
IN MY NATIVE TONGUE, THE NEW SOBRIQUET MEANS "CLEAR SKY."
THE SKIES SURROUNDING AMERICA HAVE BECOME MURKY AND GRAY, DENSE, DARK CLOUDS OF BUREAUCRACY, MILITARISM AND CORPORATE GREED CHOKE THE SWEET AIR OF FREEDOM AND THE PROMISE OF THE DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT.
I HAVE COME TO CLEAR THE AIR.
BUT THE TIME HAS COME TO CALCULATE THE APPRECIABLE EXTENT OF POSSIBLE RESISTANCE.
WHEN I WALKED THE EARTH DURING THE FIRST HEROIC AGE, THESE FREE AGENTS, THESE WILD CARDS ALL STOOD TO OPPOSE THE BENEFITS OF MY RULE.
PERHAPS IN THIS CENTURY, WITH THE CHESSBOARD CONFIGURED DIFFERENTLY, I MIGHT STAND TO WIN THESE NEW AGENTS INTO MY EMPLOY, THROUGH CO-OPTION OR CORRUPTION.

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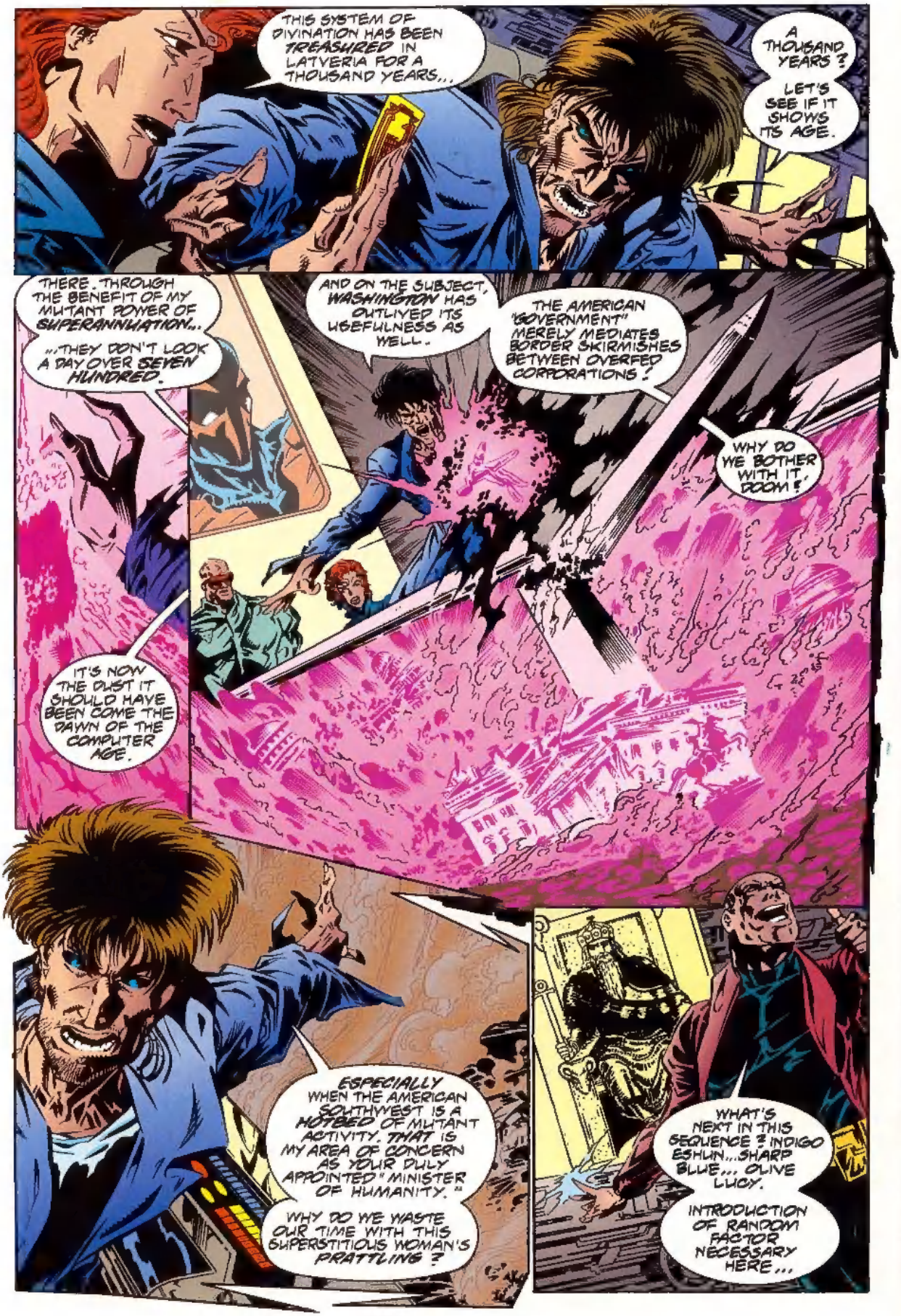
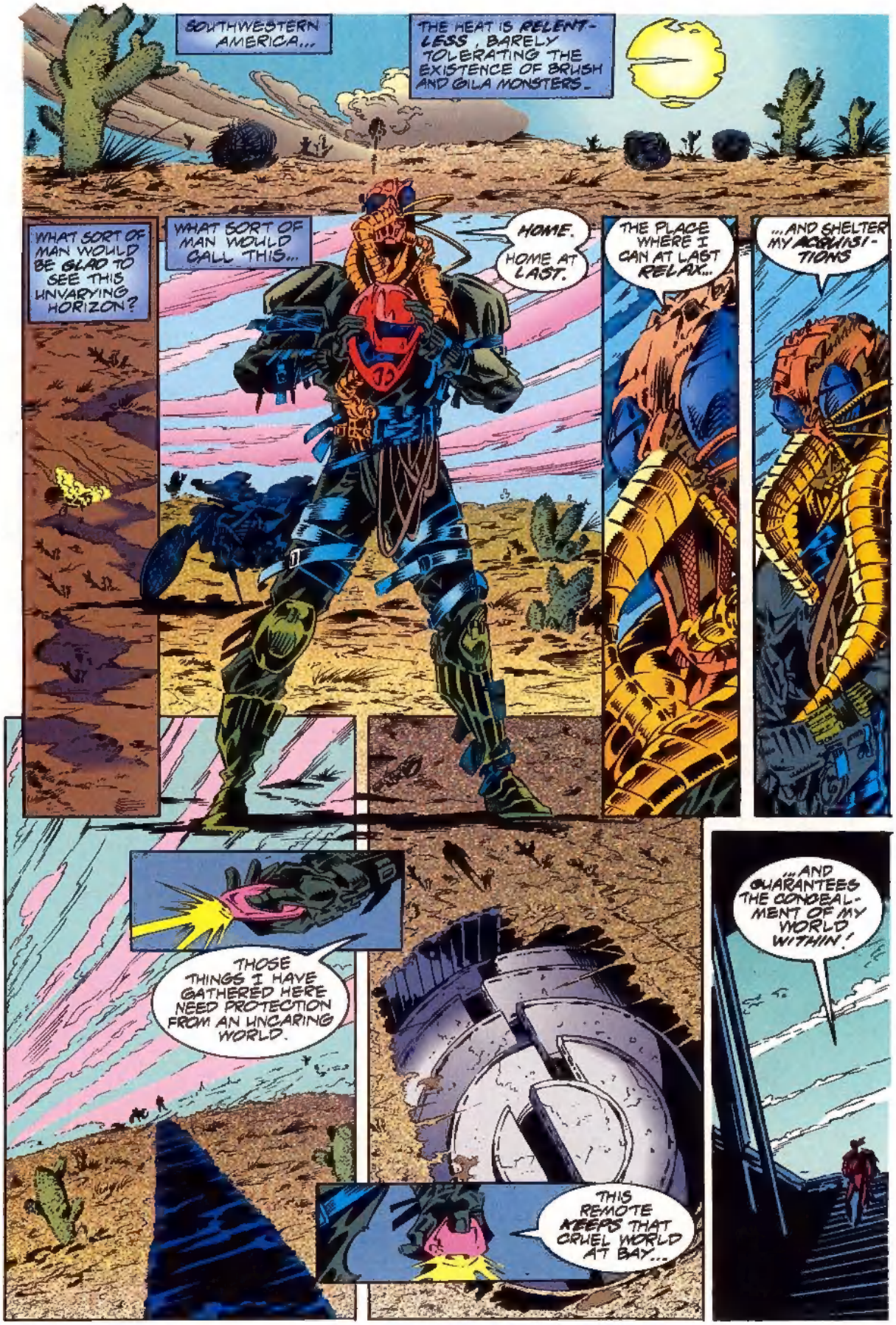
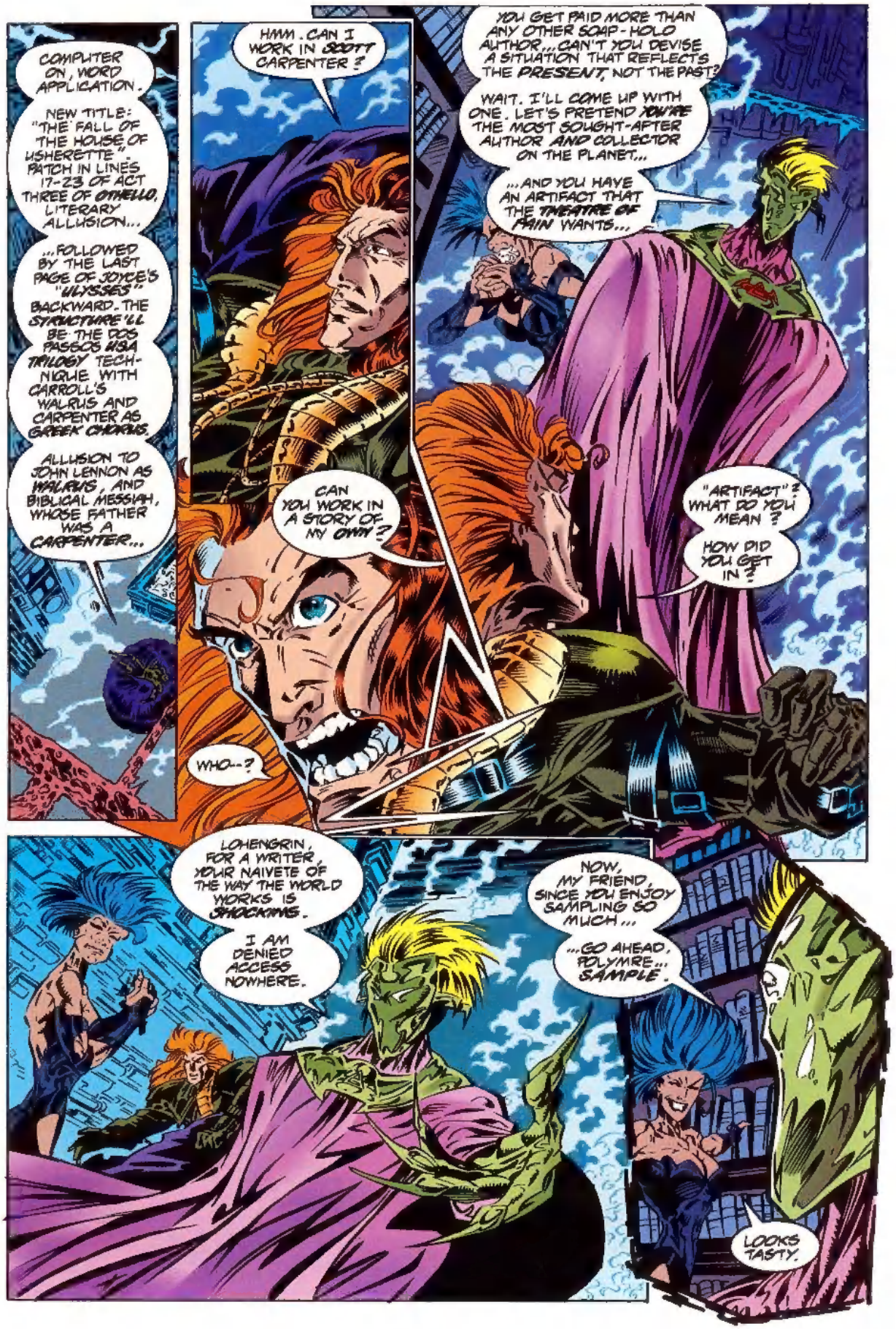

THIS SYSTEM OF DIVINATION HAS BEEN TREASURED IN LATVERIA FOR A THOUSAND YEARS...
A THOUSAND YEARS? LET'S SEE IF IT SHOWS ITS AGE.
THERE. THROUGH THE BENEFIT OF MY MUTANT POWER OF SUPERANNUATION...
...THEY DON'T LOOK A DAY OVER SEVEN HUNDRED.
AND ON THE SUBJECT, WASHINGTON HAS OUTLIVED ITS USEFULNESS AS WELL.
THE AMERICAN "GOVERNMENT" MERELY MEDIATES BORDER SKIRMISHES BETWEEN OVERFED CORPORATIONS!
WHY DO WE BOTHER WITH IT, DOOM?
IT'S NOW THE DUST IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN COME THE DAWN OF THE COMPUTER AGE.
ESPECIALLY WHEN THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST IS A HOTBED OF MUTANT ACTIVITY. THAT IS MY AREA OF CONCERN AS YOUR DULY APPOINTED "MINISTER OF HUMANITY."
WHY DO WE WASTE OUR TIME WITH THIS SUPERSTITIOUS WOMAN'S PRATTLING?
WHAT'S NEXT IN THIS SEQUENCE? INDIGO ESHUN...SHARP BLUE... OLIVE LUCY.
INTRODUCTION OF RANDOM FACTOR NECESSARY HERE...

I COMMUNE WITH DOOM'S WORLDBOARD.
NOW, IT IS A TAROT ORACLE. PERFECT WEDDING OF MEDIEVAL LATVERIA AND COMPUTER AGE.
IT WILL ALSO TOSS THE I CHING. COMPUTER-ANIMATED YARROWSTALKS, FUN TO WATCH.
REPLY HAZY, TRY AGAIN. IT IS DECIDEDLY SO.
RANDOM FACTOR FACTORED IN.
JUDGEMENT
DEATH
ENOUGH.
STEPPING OUT FOR A SMOKE?
I SEE THIS PRE-WAR CONFERENCE HAS REACHED THE POINT OF DIMINISHING RETURNS.
I CAN BETTER SPEND THIS ALLOTTED TIME GOING SHOPPING.
SHOPPING?
DOOM?
DOOM!

MAKE THIS GOOD.
WHAT ARE YOU KEEPING FROM US?
HOW CAN WE ASSIST YOU IN THE UPCOMING AMERICAN CAMPAIGN... IF YOU PREFER TO KEEP YOUR THOUGHTS... YOUR PLANS... EVERYTHING SECRET?
YOU'VE BECOME A PARANOIAC!
EVEN PARANOIDS HAVE ENEMIES.
HAVE YOU SO SOON FORGOTTEN YOUR BETRAYAL OF ME?
... ALL TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF YOUR BROTHER, KAZ. HAD YOU COME TO ME FIRST...
THE ONE I PAID YOU BACK FOR BY HAVING NKRUMAH PUT A BLADE TO YOUR THROAT?
YOU SOLD ME DOWN THE CIRI RIVER TO AN ENTITY KNOWN AS THE NEON ANGEL, WHO TURNED OUT TO BE MY WORST ENEMY...
HOW COULD I COME TO YOU? I WANTED TO TELL YOU WHAT I'D DONE, BUT WE'RE ALL AFRAID TO GIVE YOU BAD NEWS! YOU BEHAVE IRRATIONALLY. YOU'RE ALWAYS ANGRY. NOW... YOU'RE IN CHARGE, BUT...
DEAR FORTUNE... I KNOW YOU'RE DISTRAUGHT OVER KAZ... AND THE DEATH OF YOUR BELOVED POET.
YOU MUST BELIEVE THAT THEIR FATES TOUCH ME AS WELL, YET...
AFTERLIFE INTERFACE POSSIBLE NEXT?
COMMUNE WITH POET? I BECOME POET? BANANA FANA FOE POET?
HOW AM I TO RUN AMERICA...
... WHILE LEAVING LATVERIA TO THE LIKES OF YOU?
I AM POET... AND DON'T KNOW IT.

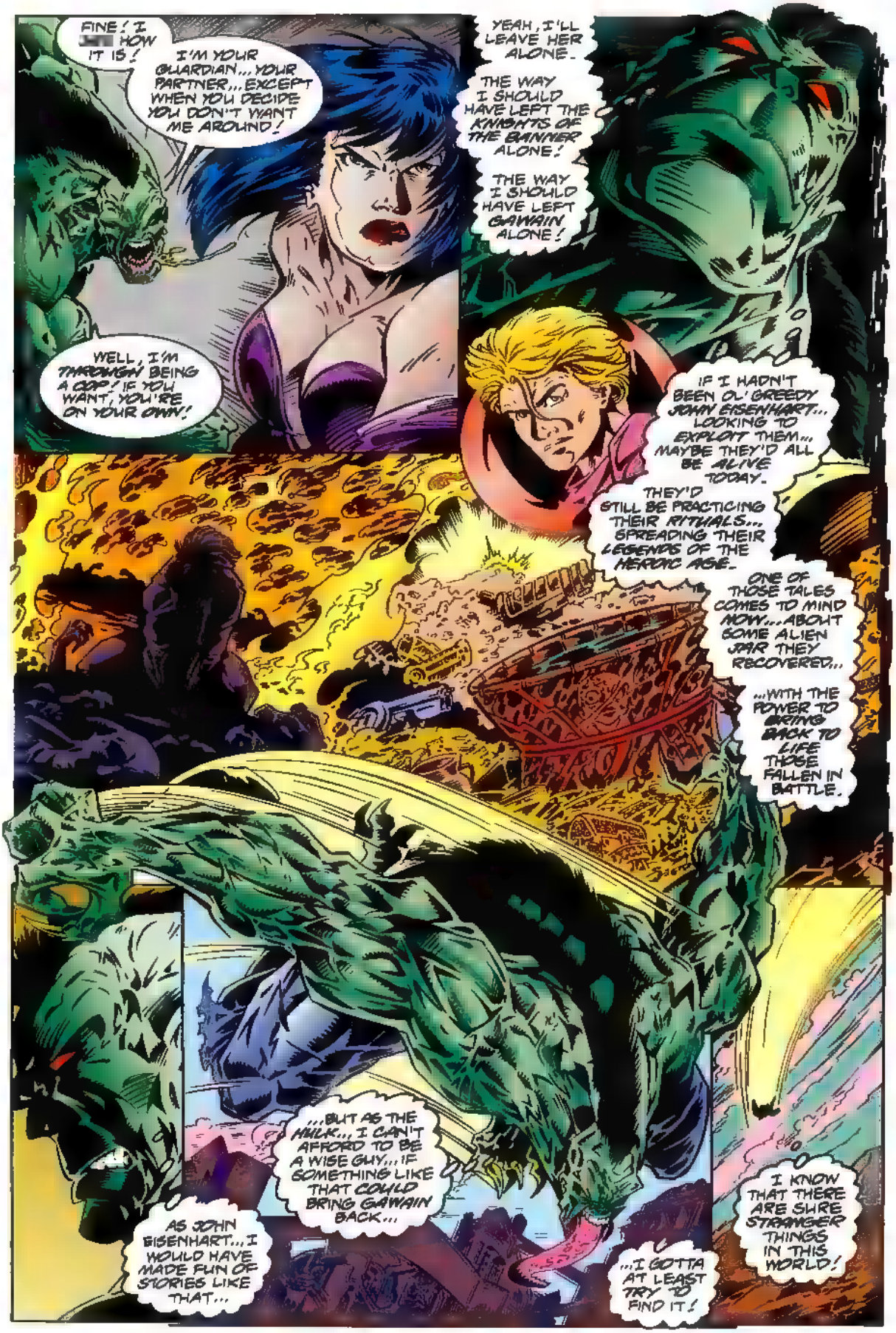

SOUTHWESTERN AMERICA...
THE HEAT IS RELENTLESS, BARELY TOLERATING THE EXISTENCE OF BRUSH AND GILA MONSTERS.
WHAT SORT OF MAN WOULD BE GLAD TO SEE THIS UNVARYING HORIZON?
WHAT SORT OF MAN WOULD CALL THIS...
HOME.
HOME AT LAST.
THE PLACE WHERE I CAN AT LAST RELAX...
...AND SHELTER MY ACQUISITIONS
THOSE THINGS I HAVE GATHERED HERE NEED PROTECTION FROM AN UNCARING WORLD.
THIS REMOTE KEEPS THAT CRUEL WORLD AT BAY...
...AND GUARANTEES THE CONCEALMENT OF MY WORLD WITHIN!

KLIC
IT TOOK FOREVER TO BUILD THIS PLACE.
IT TOOK FOREVER TO GATHER THESE ARTIFACTS AND KEEP THEM UNDER THIS ROOF.
SUITS OF ARMOR FROM WARS FOUGHT AND UNFOUGHT. GLOBES THAT POSTULATED A BETTER WORLD THAN THIS ONE.
WORKS OF ART THAT CAN'T BE DISPLAYED ON THE WALLS FOR FEAR OF BLOCKING THE REFRIGERANT, THE VITAL CHILL THAT KEEPS MY BOOKS FROM AGING.
THAT THESE THINGS SHOULD PERISH... IS THE ONLY REASON LOMENDORIN FEARS THE PASSAGE OF TIME...
...FOR I AM A MAN WITH ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD!

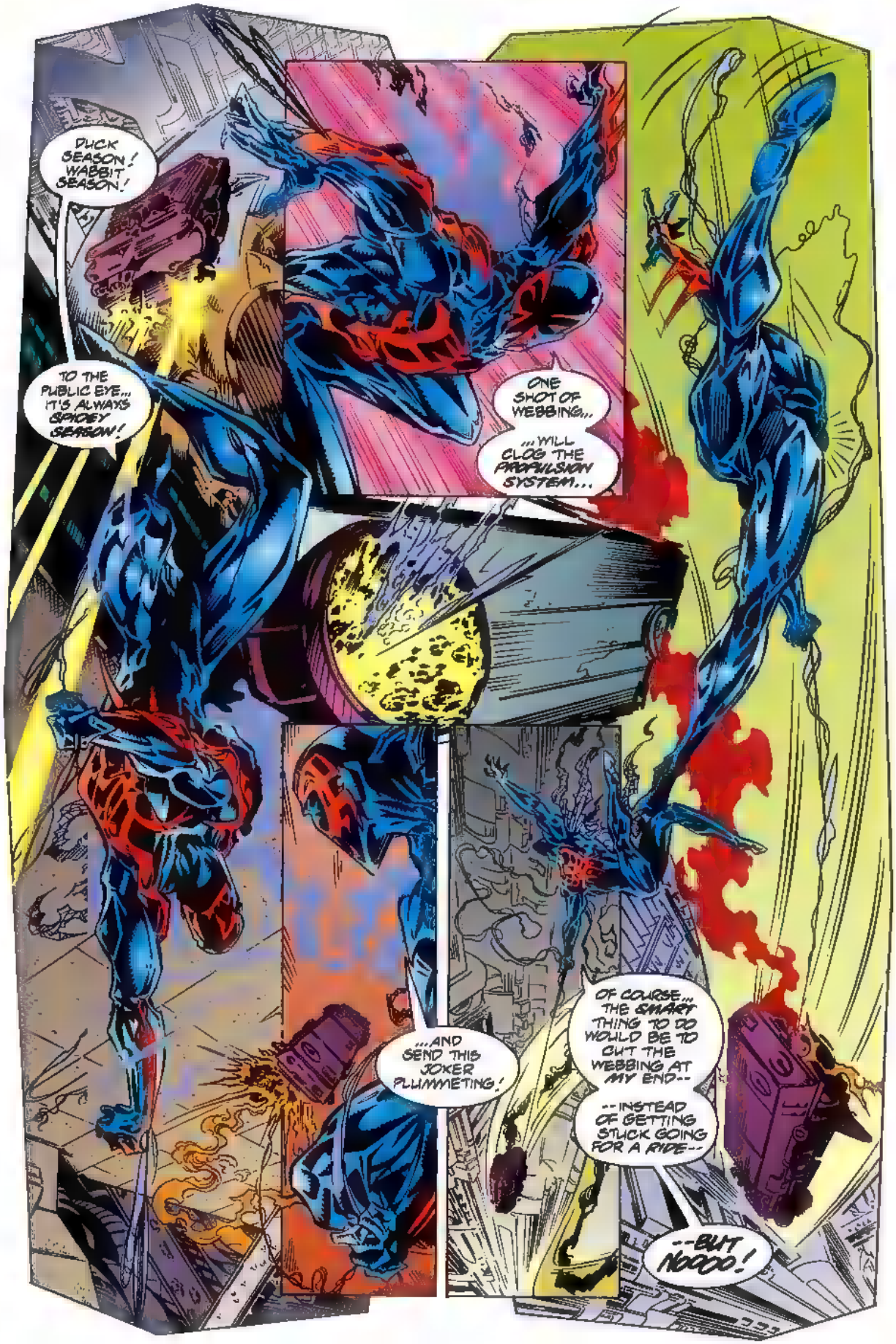

COMPUTER ON, WORD APPLICATION.
NEW TITLE: "THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHERETTE." PATCH IN LINES 17-23 OF ACT THREE OF OTHELLO, LITERARY ALLUSION...
...FOLLOWED BY THE LAST PAGE OF JOYCE'S "ULYSSES" BACKWARD. THE STRUCTURE'LL BE THE DOS PASSOS USA TRILOGY TECHNIQUE WITH CARROLL'S WALRUS AND CARPENTER AS GREEK CHORUS.
ALLUSION TO JOHN LENNON AS WALRUS, AND BIBLICAL MESSIAH, WHOSE FATHER WAS A CARPENTER...
HMM. CAN I WORK IN SCOTT CARPENTER?
WHO--?
CAN YOU WORK IN A STORY OF MY OWN?
YOU GET PAID MORE THAN ANY OTHER SOAP-HOLO AUTHOR... CAN'T YOU DEVISE A SITUATION THAT REFLECTS THE PRESENT, NOT THE PAST?
WAIT. I'LL COME UP WITH ONE. LET'S PRETEND YOU'RE THE MOST SOUGHT-AFTER AUTHOR AND COLLECTOR ON THE PLANET...
...AND YOU HAVE AN ARTIFACT THAT THE THEATRE OF PAIN WANTS...
"ARTIFACT"? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HOW DID YOU GET IN?
LOHENGRIN, FOR A WRITER, YOUR NAIVETE OF THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS IS SHOCKING.
I AM DENIED ACCESS NOWHERE.
NOW, MY FRIEND, SINCE YOU ENJOY SAMPLING SO MUCH...
...GO AHEAD, POLYMRE... SAMPLE.
LOOKS TASTY.

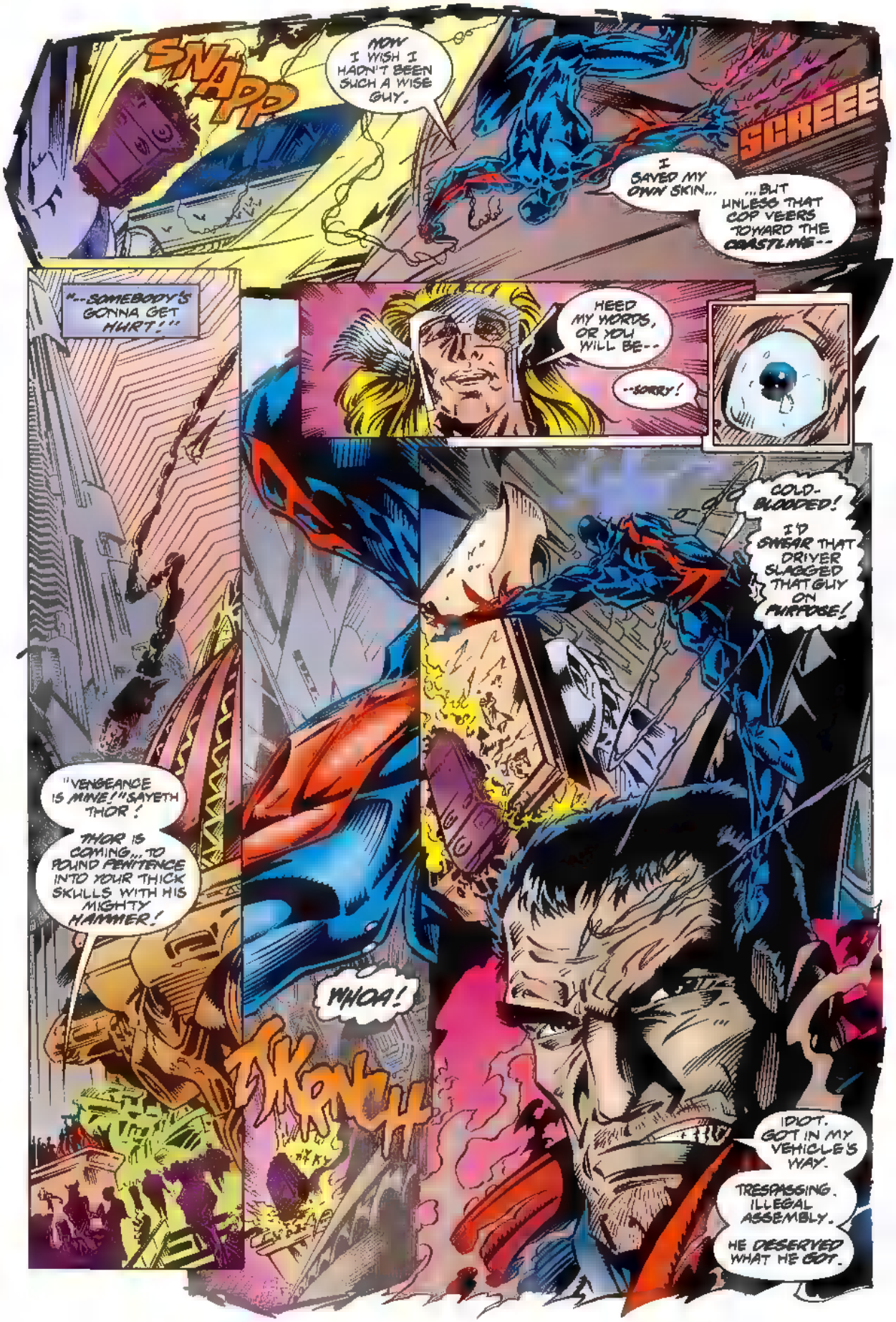
SHOULDA CALLED IT THE GOURMET REPAST TRILOGY. IT'S DELICIOUS!
YOU KNOW THE ARTIFACT WE MEAN. BRING IT... OR YOUR BOOK COLLECTION BECOMES A BUFFET.
SKRUNCH
NO! THAT'S THE LAST HARD COPY IN THE WORLD OF THE GORMENGHAST TRILOGY!
AH, EXACTLY. I SO RESENT BEING TREATED LIKE AN IDIOT.
YOU KNEW THAT THIS OPALESCENT ALIEN FOSSIL WAS WHAT I WANTED ALL THE TIME, DIDN'T YOU?
WELL JUST SO YOU CAN NO LONGER RESORT TO GUILE...
FROM NOW ON, YOU WEAR THE BRAND... THE CONTROLLING EMBLEM...
... OF SEPTEMBRE!

LOTHSLAND STUDIOS...
THE MARKETROIDS HERE JUST CAN'T DELIVER THE KIND OF NUMBERS I CAN!
LET ME PUT SOME FEELERS OUT FOR YOU, AND--
SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE ALREADY GOT SOME FEELERS OUT FOR ME.
AW, DON'T BE THAT WAY, QUIRK!
IN A MONTH, I'LL BE STARTING MY OWN COMPANY! I CAN DO MUCH BETTER FOR YOU THAN KEISHA...OR ZAMORA... OR... OR... OR...
OR WHO?
THIS GUY BOTHERIN' YOU?
HEY, BUD, IF YOU'RE USIN' OUR TIME AND LOTHSLAND'S RESOURCES TO START YOUR OWN FIRM--
--MAYBE YOU OUGHTA GO FREELANCE... LIKE... NOW.
OH, HONESTLY!
HULK, WHERE DID YOU GET THE IDEA THAT I COULDN'T TAKE CARE OF MYSELF? YOU THINK I HAVEN'T HEARD THAT LINE BEFORE?

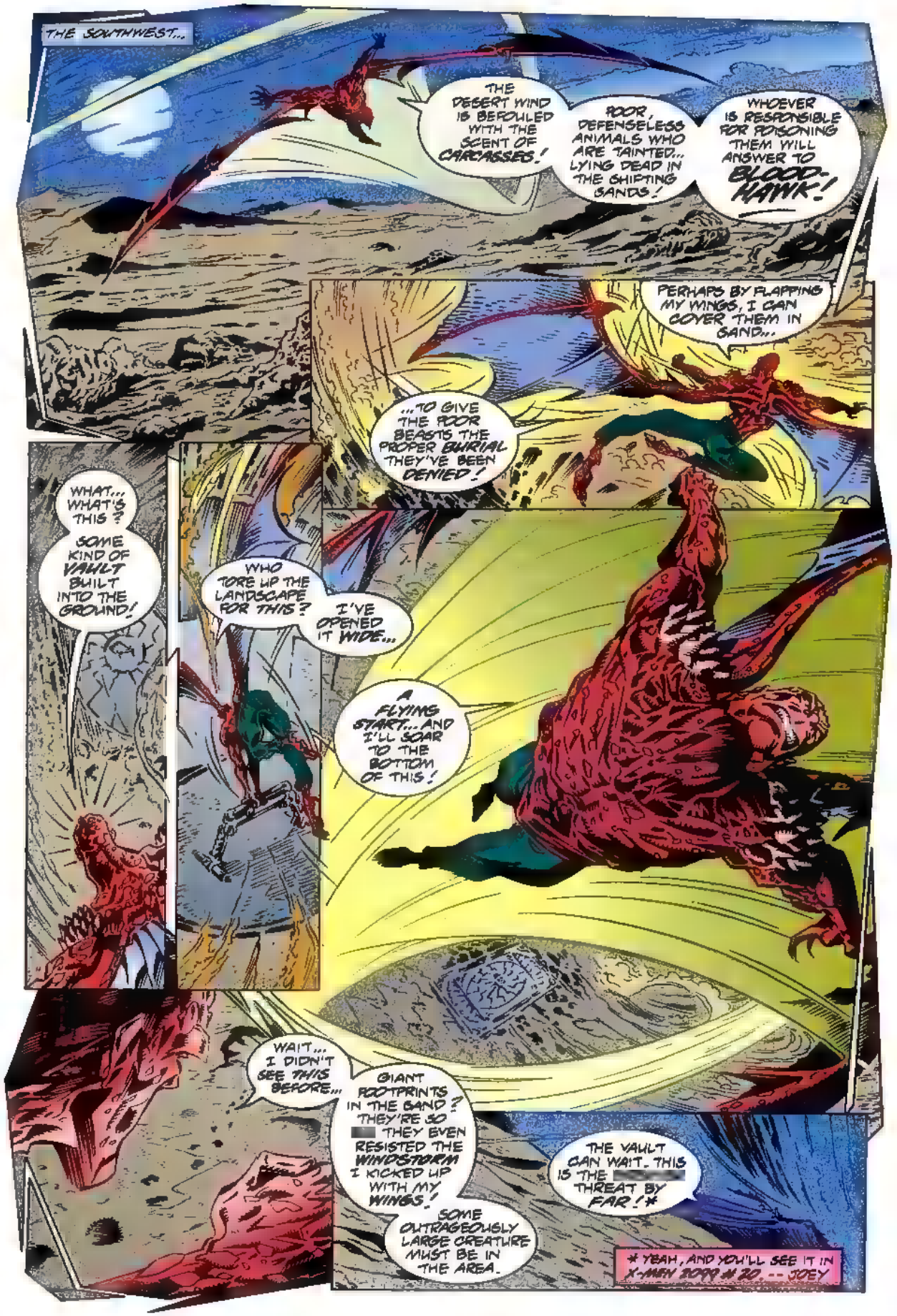

FINE! I [redacted] HOW IT IS!
I'M YOUR GUARDIAN... YOUR PARTNER... EXCEPT WHEN YOU DECIDE YOU DON'T WANT ME AROUND!
WELL, I'M THROUGH BEING A COP! IF YOU WANT, YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!
YEAH, I'LL LEAVE HER ALONE.
THE WAY I SHOULD HAVE LEFT THE KNIGHTS OF THE BANNER ALONE!
THE WAY I SHOULD HAVE LEFT GAWAIN ALONE!
IF I HADN'T BEEN OL' GREEDY JOHN EISENHART... LOOKING TO EXPLOIT THEM... MAYBE THEY'D ALL BE ALIVE TODAY.
THEY'D STILL BE PRACTICING THEIR RITUALS... SPREADING THEIR LEGENDS OF THE HEROIC AGE.
ONE OF THOSE TALES COMES TO MIND NOW... ABOUT SOME ALIEN JAR THEY RECOVERED...
...WITH THE POWER TO BRING BACK TO LIFE THOSE FALLEN IN BATTLE.
AS JOHN EISENHART... I WOULD HAVE MADE FUN OF STORIES LIKE THAT...
...BUT AS THE HULK... I CAN'T AFFORD TO BE A WISE GUY... IF SOMETHING LIKE THAT COULD BRING GAWAIN BACK...
...I GOTTA AT LEAST TRY TO FIND IT!
I KNOW THAT THERE ARE SURE STRANGER THINGS IN THIS WORLD!

SO THIS IS THE FABLED GHOST IN THE MACHINE!
DON'T PRETEND TO BE IMPRESSED, VON DOOM.
WE ARE MORE IMPRESSED THAT A MEGALOMANIAC SUCH AS YOU WOULD COME TO THE GHOSTWORKS TO GO "SHOPPING"... THAN YOU COULD EVER [redacted] WITH US.
AH, BUT I AM IMPRESSED. AN ADMIXTURE OF SCIENCE AND MAGIC? HOW COULD I FAIL TO BE INTRIGUED?
I AM MORE SYMPATHETIC TO YOU THAN YOU REALIZE... AND THE VASSAL YOU CALL THE GHOST RIDER INTRIGUES ME MOST OF ALL.
HIM I WOULD HAVE AS AN AGENT. HE CAN FIND THE BAUBLE I DESIRE.
I NEED HIM TO LEAVE TRANSVERSE CITY FOR THE TIME BEING... TO RECOVER AN ARTIFACT FOR ME IN THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST.
I WOULD ENDEAVOR TO DO THIS MYSELF... BUT I DON'T WANT TO ANNOUNCE MY PRESENCE IN AMERICA TOO EARLY...
...AS A HISTORICAL PERSONAGE, THE APPEARANCE OF VICTOR VON DOOM...
"...MAY HAVE SPECIAL RESONANCE TO SOME."
YOWW!
KAPOW


DUCK SEASON! WABBIT SEASON!
TO THE PUBLIC EYE... IT'S ALWAYS SPIDEY SEASON!
ONE SHOT OF WEBBING...
...WILL CLOG THE PROPULSION SYSTEM...
...AND SEND THIS JOKER PLUMMETING!
OF COURSE... THE SMART THING TO DO WOULD BE TO CUT THE WEBBING AT MY END--
--INSTEAD OF GETTING STUCK GOING FOR A RIDE--
--BUT NOOOO!

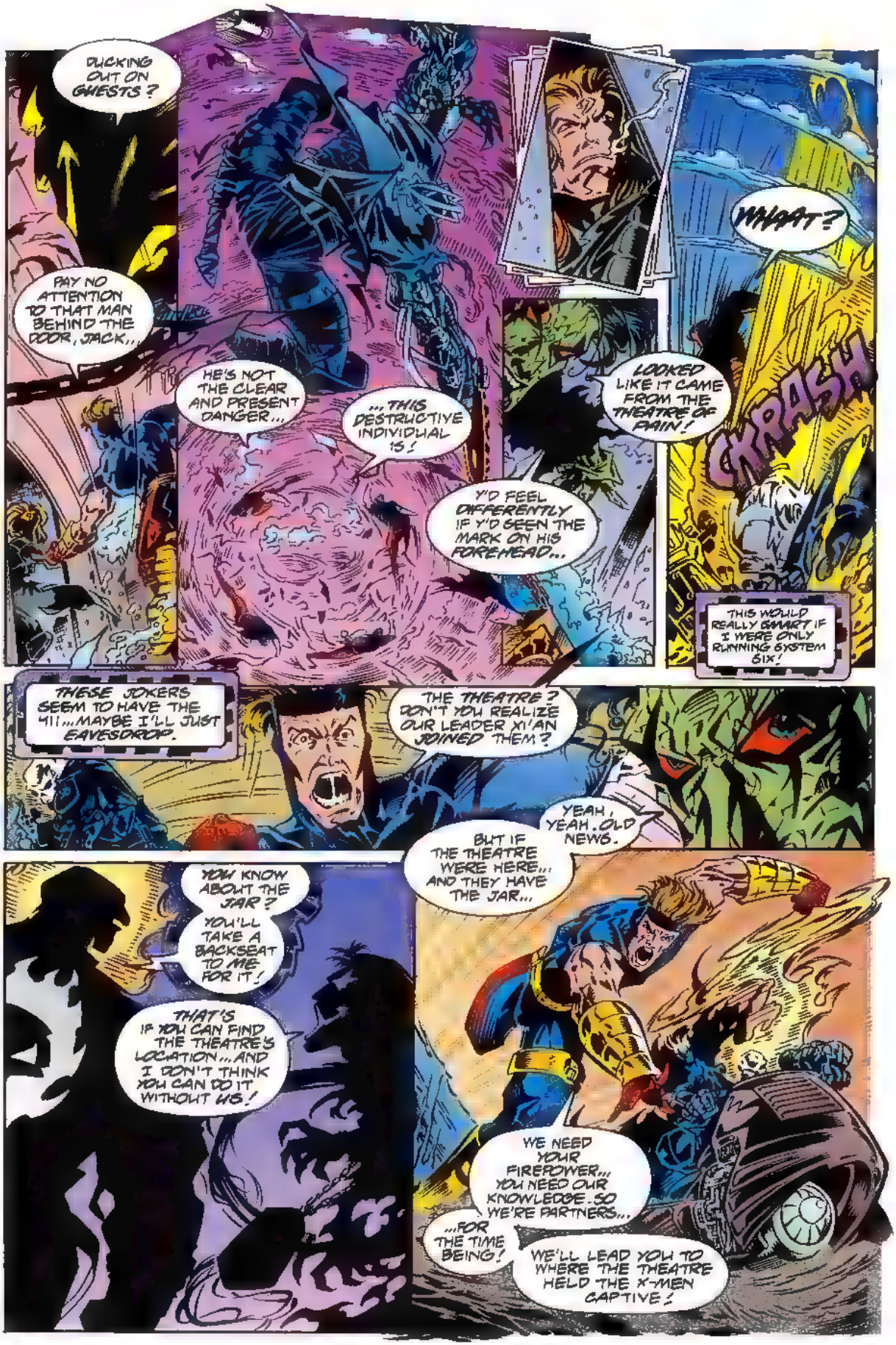

SNAPP
NOW I WISH I HADN'T BEEN SUCH A WISE GUY.
SCREEE
I SAVED MY OWN SKIN...
...BUT UNLESS THAT COP VEERS TOWARD THE COASTLINE--
"--SOMEBODY'S GONNA GET HURT!"
HEED MY WORDS, OR YOU WILL BE--
--SORRY!
COLD-BLOODED!
I'D SWEAR THAT DRIVER SLAGGED THAT GUY ON PURPOSE!
"VENGEANCE IS MINE!" SAYETH THOR!
THOR IS COMING... TO POUND PENITENCE INTO YOUR THICK SKULLS WITH HIS MIGHTY HAMMER!
WHOA!
IDIOT. GOT IN MY VEHICLE'S WAY.
TRESPASSING. ILLEGAL ASSEMBLY.
HE DESERVED WHAT HE GOT.

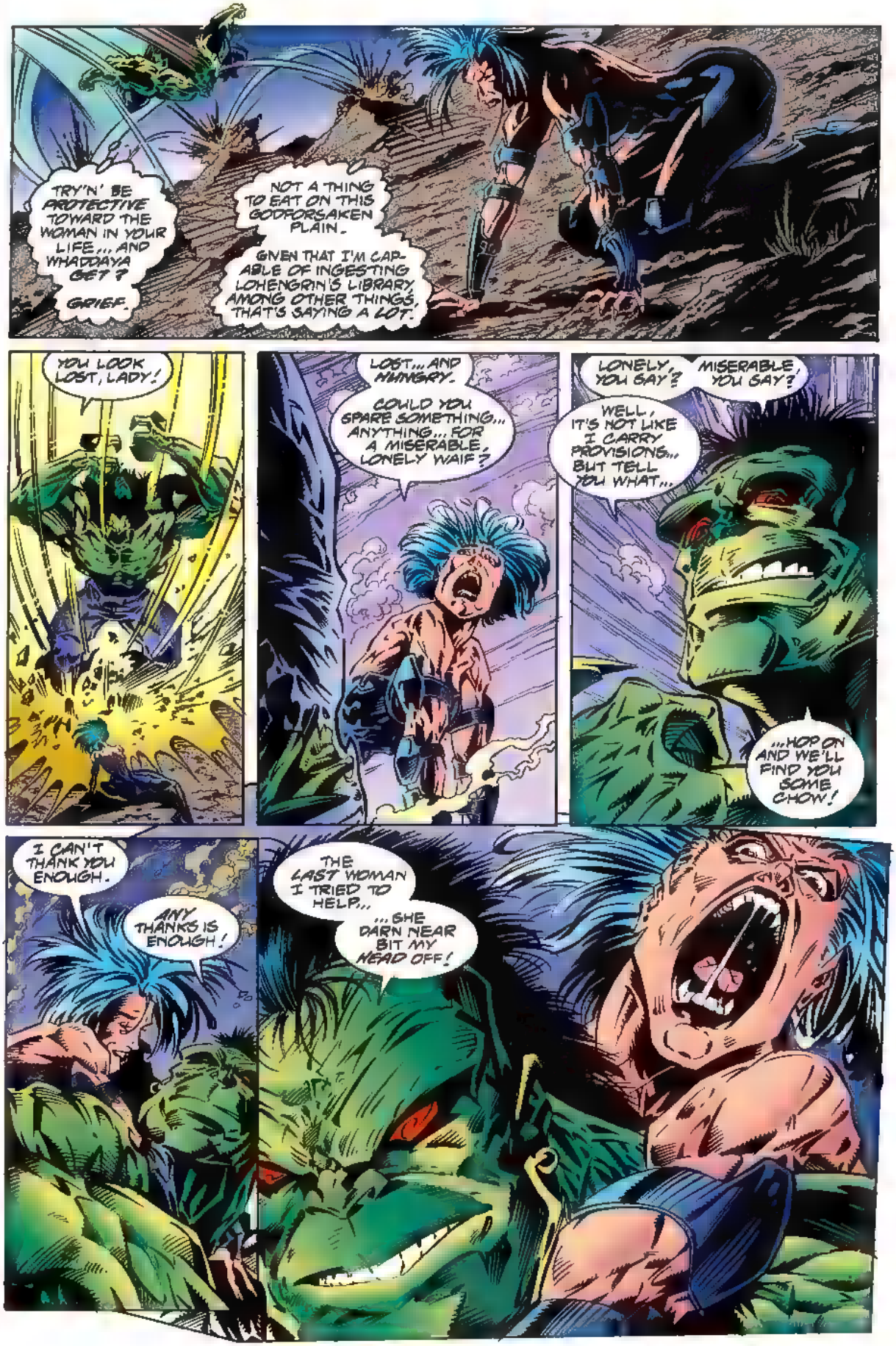
WAIT.
WE'VE MET BEFORE. AND EVEN THEN YOU WERE A LOUSY DRIVER.
THOSE DUDS ARE DIFFERENT... BUT I'D KNOW THE FACE ANYWHERE.
YOU'RE THE PUNISHER.
DON'T CALL ME THAT IN OTHER PEOPLE'S EARSHOT. I'M JAKE GALLOWS.
I TRIED TO FLAG YOU DOWN... BUT YOU GAVE ME A HOSTILE REACTION RIGHT AWAY!
"HOSTILE?" YOU'RE PUBLIC EYE. I'M ALLERGIC TO BULLET WOUNDS.
ARE YOU ALLERGIC TO THOSE PHONY NORSE GODS [redacted] FOUGHT TOGETHER? 'CAUSE I THINK ALCHEMAX IS TRYIN' [redacted] BRING 'EM [redacted]
AN ALCHEMAX RECON TEAM "RECOVERED" A STRANGE ARTIFACT FROM A "KNIGHTS OF THE BANNER" CACHE.
SUPPOSEDLY, THE THING IS ABLE TO RESTORE LIFE.
AVATARR WANTED IT TO BRING BACK THE DEAD NORSE GODS... BUT THE THING WAS STOLEN OUT FROM UNDER HIS BUG EYES.
WEIRD THING'S THE WAY IT WAS TAKEN... IT WAS GRAB[redacted] BY A MYSTICAL HAND THROUGH SOMETHING CALLED A VIRTUAL LAYREALITY GATE.
TYLER STONE SAYS THE ONLY TWO PEOPLE WHO COULD PULL OFF A STUNT LIKE THAT ARE DOOM AND AVATARR.
AND WHY WOULD THE HEAD OF ALCHEMAX STEAL FROM HIMSELF?
THROUGH SOME KIND OF TRIANGULATION, THEY FIGURE DOOM TOOK THE ARTIFACT SOMEWHERE SOUTH-WEST. I CAN ARRANGE PUBLIC EYE TRANSPORT FOR US TO GET IT BACK... IF YOU'RE INTERESTED.
WHY WOULD I BE INTERESTED?
ALCHEMAX, STONE 'N' AVATARR, OFFER A DIRECTORSHIP IN THE COMPANY FOR ITS RETURN.
THEY SAY POWER CORRUPTS...
...WOULDN'T IT BE NICE TO FIND OUT FIRST HAND?


THE SOUTHWEST...
THE DESERT WIND IS BEFOULED WITH THE SCENT OF CARCASSES!
POOR, DEFENSELESS ANIMALS WHO ARE TAINTED... LYING DEAD IN THE SHIFTING SANDS!
WHOEVER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR POISONING THEM WILL ANSWER TO BLOOD-HAWK!
PERHAPS BY FLAPPING MY WINGS, I CAN COVER THEM IN SAND...
...TO GIVE THE POOR BEASTS THE PROPER BURIAL THEY'VE BEEN DENIED!
WHAT... WHAT'S THIS?
SOME KIND OF VAULT BUILT INTO THE GROUND!
WHO TORE UP THE LANDSCAPE FOR THIS?
I'VE OPENED IT WIDE...
A FLYING START... AND I'LL SOAR TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS!
WAIT... I DIDN'T SEE THIS BEFORE...
GIANT FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND? THEY'RE SO [redacted] THEY EVEN RESISTED THE WINDSTORM I KICKED UP WITH MY WINGS!
SOME OUTRAGEOUSLY LARGE CREATURE MUST BE IN THE AREA.
THE VAULT CAN WAIT. THIS IS THE [redacted] THREAT BY FAR!*
* YEAH, AND YOU'LL SEE IT IN X-MEN 2099 #20. -- JOEY

BLOODHAWK!
THAT'S BLOODHAWK!
IT'S ME, HENRI! WAIT!
NO GOOD. EVEN AT MY SPEED, I CAN'T FLY... AND THE SAND'S TOO MUCH RESISTANCE FOR ME TO TRAVEL ANY FASTER!
WE GOT A JOB TO DO!
YEAH... DUMPING OFF THE SYNGES OUT HERE! THEY DESERVE IT!
NO, NO. I HAD A LITTLE SIDE TRIP PLANNED.
COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN!
GIVE UP, MEANSTREAK! LET YOUR MARASCHINO-LOOKING PLAYMATE GO BACK TO THE RED-DYE-NUMBER-TWO VAT THAT SPAWNED HIM.
I BROUGHT THE ASHES OF HEIMDALL... ONE OF MY FALLEN COMRADES FROM THE EXPERIMENT THAT RE-CREATED ME AS LOKI... IN THIS FUNERARY BOX.
I MIGHT LEARN MORE ABOUT HIS CONSTITUTION... AND MINE... WHEN WE RETRIEVE A CERTAIN ARTIFACT I'VE HEARD ABOUT.
SAID ARTIFACT MIGHT SAVE US BOTH FROM... EVENTUAL... DOOM.
AND YOU'RE SURE IT'S DOWN HERE, JORDAN?
DON'T CALL ME JORDAN ANYMORE, OR EVEN LOKI.
THE NAME'S HALLOWEEN JACK.
HMPH. SOUNDS LIKE A REALLY BAD-TASTING CHEESE.

BELOW...
YOU GAVE IT AWAY TO SOME TWIST?
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
SEE HOW MAD I AM? THAT'S NOT EVEN CLOSE TO HOW EXPONENTIALLY MAD DOOM'S GONNA BE!
PLEASE... PLEASE... PUT ME DOWN.
DON'T KILL ME... I'M... I'M INFLUENTIAL!
YOU POOR MISERABLE SOUL. WE OF THE THEATRICAL WORLD PROVIDE HAPPY ENDINGS FOR OUR AUDIENCES... EMPOWERING THEM TO TRANSFORM THEIR OWN LIVES!
I CAN DO THE GAME FOR YOU... JUST DON'T KILL ME!
KILL YOU? WHY DO THAT... WHEN I CAN REALLY HURT YOU?
ZZZ
ROWW
BYE BYE, BOOKS! HOPE YOU GOT BACK-UP FLOPPIES!
HE'S MAD! WISH I'D ALLOCATED MORE MEMORY TO THE SECRET DOOR... SO IT'D OPEN FASTER!

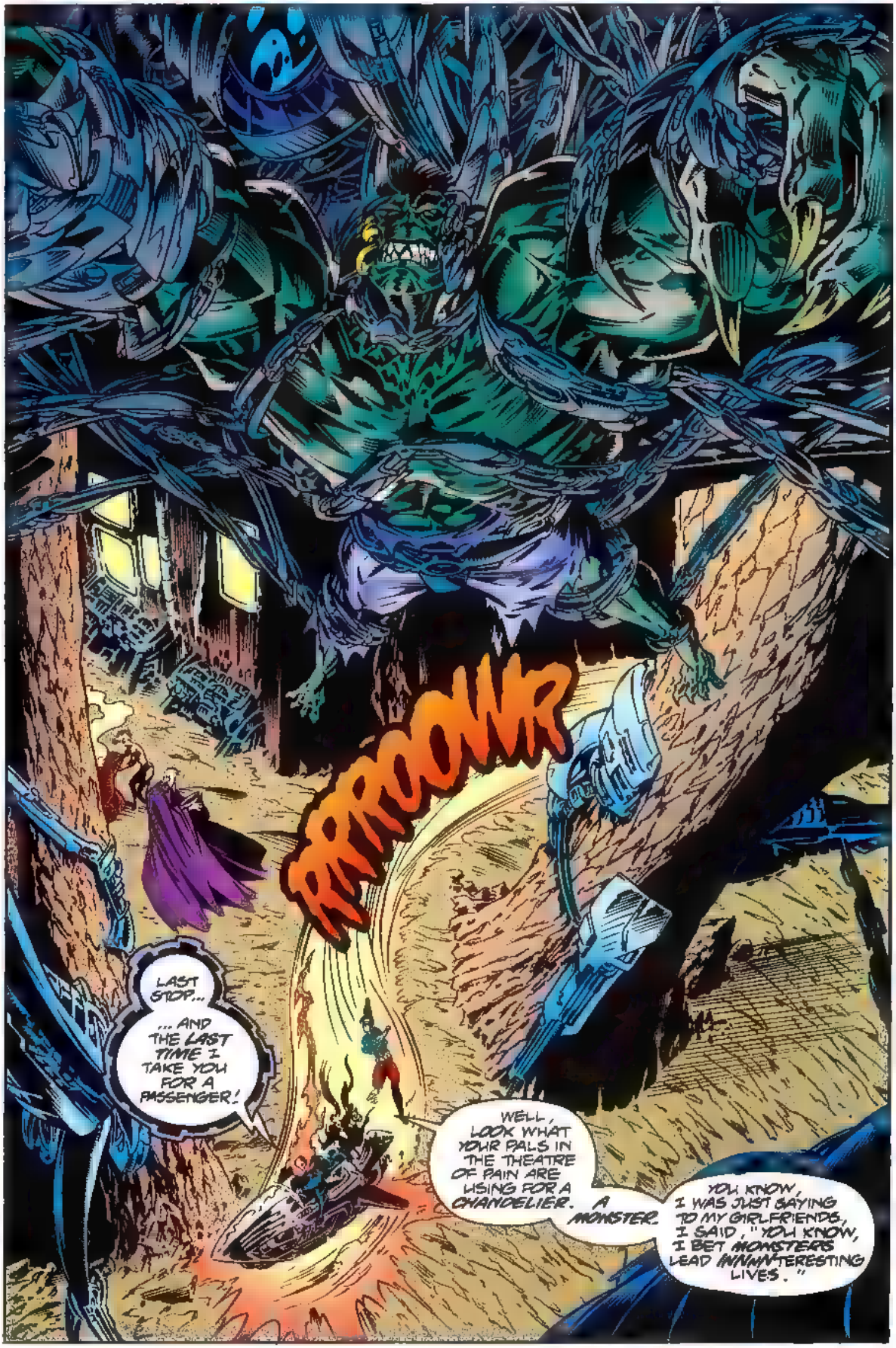

DUCKING OUT ON GUESTS?
PAY NO ATTENTION TO THAT MAN BEHIND THE DOOR, JACK...
HE'S NOT THE CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER...
...THIS DESTRUCTIVE INDIVIDUAL IS!
Y'D FEEL DIFFERENTLY IF Y'D SEEN THE MARK ON HIS FOREHEAD...
LOOKED LIKE IT CAME FROM THE THEATRE OF PAIN!
WHAT?
CRASH
THIS WOULD REALLY SMART IF I WERE ONLY RUNNING SYSTEM SIX!
THESE JOKERS SEEM TO HAVE THE 411...MAYBE I'LL JUST EAVESDROP.
THE THEATRE? DON'T YOU REALIZE OUR LEADER XI'AN JOINED THEM?
YEAH, YEAH. OLD NEWS.
BUT IF THE THEATRE WERE HERE... AND THEY HAVE THE JAR...
YOU KNOW ABOUT THE JAR?
YOU'LL TAKE A BACKSEAT TO ME FOR IT!
THAT'S IF YOU CAN FIND THE THEATRE'S LOCATION...AND I DON'T THINK YOU CAN DO IT WITHOUT US!
WE NEED YOUR FIREPOWER... YOU NEED OUR KNOWLEDGE. SO WE'RE PARTNERS...
...FOR THE TIME BEING!
WE'LL LEAD YOU TO WHERE THE THEATRE HELD THE X-MEN CAPTIVE!

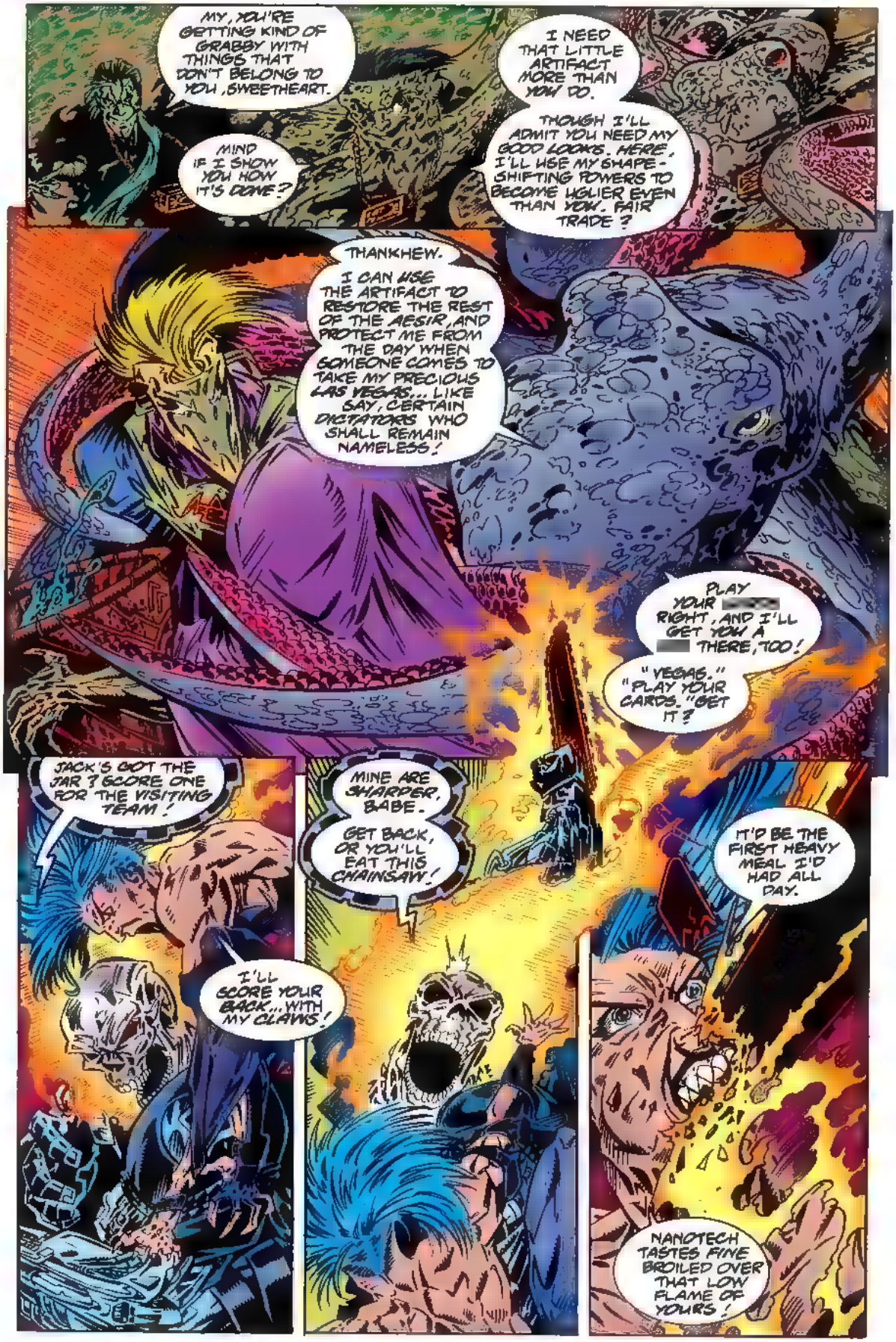

TRY'N' BE PROTECTIVE TOWARD THE WOMAN IN YOUR LIFE... AND WHADDAYA GET? GRIEF.
NOT A THING TO EAT ON THIS GODFORSAKEN PLAIN.
GIVEN THAT I'M CAPABLE OF INGESTING LOHENGRIN'S LIBRARY AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT'S SAYING A LOT.
YOU LOOK LOST, LADY!
LOST... AND HUNGRY.
COULD YOU SPARE SOMETHING... ANYTHING... FOR A MISERABLE, LONELY WAIF?
LONELY, YOU SAY? MISERABLE, YOU SAY?
WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE I CARRY PROVISIONS... BUT TELL YOU WHAT...
...HOP ON AND WE'LL FIND YOU SOME CHOW!
I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH.
ANY THANKS IS ENOUGH!
THE LAST WOMAN I TRIED TO HELP...
...SHE DARN NEAR BIT MY HEAD OFF!

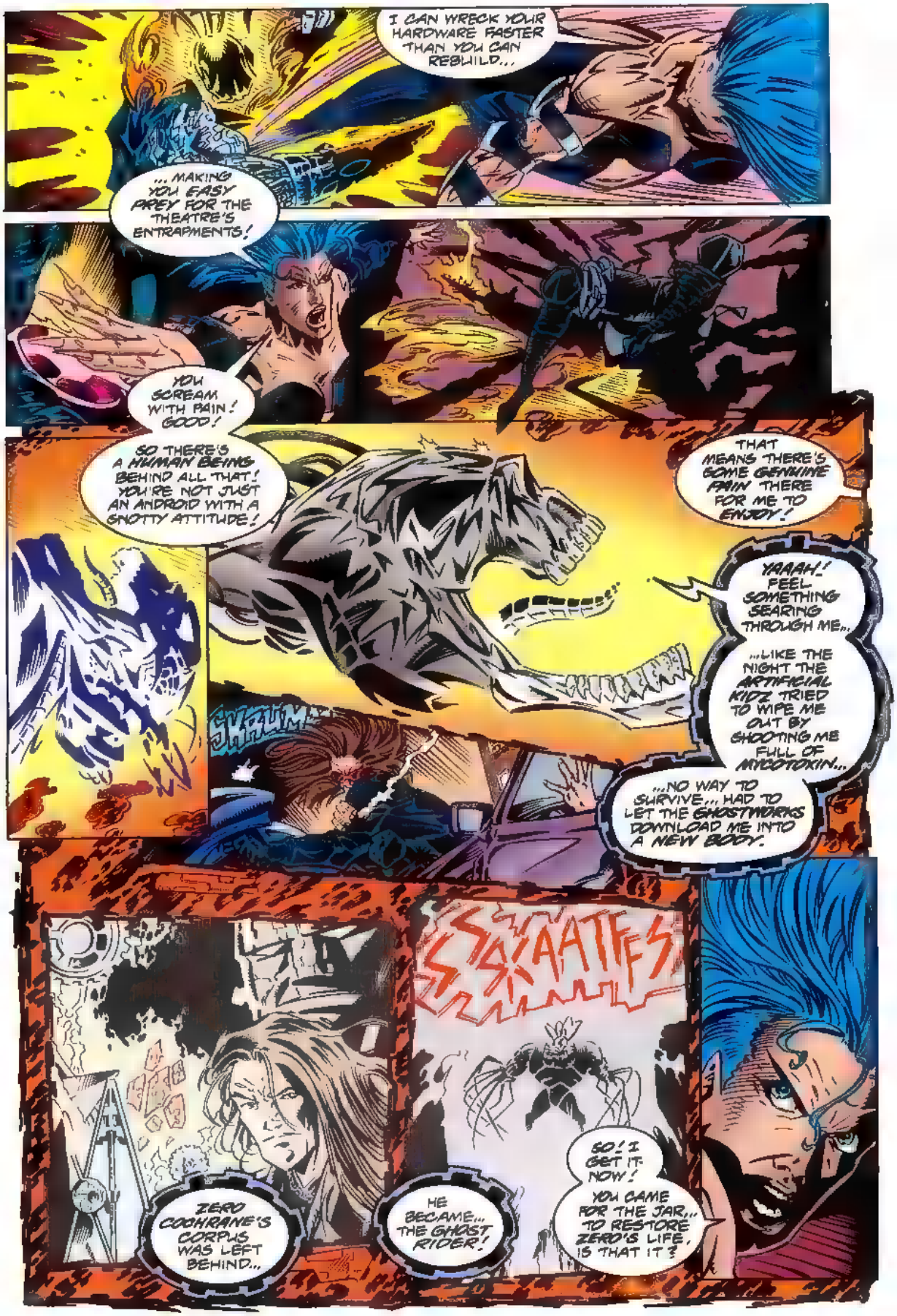
YARR!
SKRUNK
POLYMRE, YOUR CAPTIVE IS COMING TO!
WE CAN BEGIN, AT LAST!
TORTURE IS POINTLESS ON THE COMATOSE.
LOTS OF FOOD HERE, YOU BIG GREEN GOOFBALL!
TOO BAD YOU WON'T GET ANY OF IT!
LOOK AT THIS SCHIZOID'S CARICATURE OF AN ID RUN AMOK!
WHATEVER BROUGHT HIM TO THIS CONDITION IN LIFE MUST HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PAIN AND SUFFERING!

LET'S TUNE INTO IT... AND ENJOY IT, SHALL WE?
WE OF THE THEATRE OF PAIN LITERALLY REVEL IN THE MISERY OF OTHERS!
WHAT'S AT THE ROOT OF YOUR MISERY?
THE POOR KID... HE TRUSTED ME...
...AND I USED HIS TRUST TO SELL OUT HIS CLAN... THE KNIGHTS OF THE BANNER!
...EXPLOIT THEM JUST TO ADVANCE JOHN EISENHART'S LOUSY CAREER AT LOTUSLAND FOR SOME CRUMMY MOLO!
DESPITE THE FACT THAT I CAUSED THE DEATH OF EVERYONE GAWAIN KNEW... HE STILL TRIED TO SAVE MY LIFE... DURING MY STUDIO'S HOSTILE TAKEOVER!
I'D TAKE IT ALL BACK IF I COULD! WIPE THE SLATE CLEAN!
IF ONLY I COULD BRING GAWAIN BACK TO LIFE!

AH, YOU COULD. YOU COULD. IF YOU HAD THIS
BUT YOU DON'T.
IT WILL ONLY BRING ONE LIFE BACK...
AND I INTEND TO USE IT TO BRING BACK POLYMIRE'S BEAUTIFUL SISTER...
...THE THEATRE ACOLYTE WE CALL... WINTRE!
SHE WAS KILLED IN A SKIRMISH WITH SOME OF THE PRIMSE MUTANTS... YOU KNOW... THE FREAKS EVEN WE DON'T LIKE TO APPROACH.
SHE WAS RECORDING THEIR SORROW FOR OUR ORGIASTIC PLEASURE WHEN THEY... AH... BUT THAT TALE IS NOT [redacted] TO YOU.


RRRROOWR
LAST STOP...
... AND THE LAST TIME I TAKE YOU FOR A PASSENGER!
WELL, LOOK WHAT YOUR PALS IN THE THEATRE OF PAIN ARE USING FOR A CHANDELIER.
A MONSTER.
YOU KNOW, I WAS JUST SAYING TO MY GIRLFRIENDS, I SAID, "YOU KNOW, I BET MONSTERS LEAD INNNTERESTING LIVES."


MY, YOU'RE GETTING KIND OF GRABBY WITH THINGS THAT DON'T BELONG TO YOU, SWEETHEART.
I NEED THAT LITTLE ARTIFACT MORE THAN YOU DO.
MIND IF I SHOW YOU HOW IT'S DONE?
THOUGH I'LL ADMIT YOU NEED MY GOOD LOOKS. HERE, I'LL USE MY SHAPE-SHIFTING POWERS TO BECOME UGLIER EVEN THAN YOU. FAIR TRADE?
THANKHEW.
I CAN USE THE ARTIFACT TO RESTORE THE REST OF THE AESIR, AND PROTECT ME FROM THE DAY WHEN SOMEONE COMES TO TAKE MY PRECIOUS LAS VEGAS... LIKE SAY, CERTAIN DICTATORS WHO SHALL REMAIN NAMELESS!
PLAY YOUR [redacted] RIGHT, AND I'LL GET YOU A [redacted] THERE, TOO!
"VEGAS." "PLAY YOUR CARDS." "GET IT?
JACK'S GOT THE JAR? SCORE ONE FOR THE VISITING TEAM!
MINE ARE SHARPER, BABE.
GET BACK, OR YOU'LL EAT THIS CHAINSAW!
IT'D BE THE FIRST HEAVY MEAL I'D HAD ALL DAY.
I'LL SCORE YOUR BACK... WITH MY CLAWS!
NANOTECH TASTES FINE BROILED OVER THAT LOW FLAME OF YOURS!


I CAN WRECK YOUR HARDWARE FASTER THAN YOU CAN REBUILD...
...MAKING YOU EASY PREY FOR THE THEATRE'S ENTRAPMENTS!
YOU SCREAM WITH PAIN! GOOD!
SO THERE'S A HUMAN BEING BEHIND ALL THAT! YOU'RE NOT JUST AN ANDROID WITH A SNOTTY ATTITUDE!
THAT MEANS THERE'S SOME GENUINE PAIN THERE FOR ME TO ENJOY!
YAAAH! I FEEL SOMETHING SEARING THROUGH ME...
...LIKE THE NIGHT THE ARTIFICIAL KIDZ TRIED TO WIPE ME OUT BY SHOOTING ME FULL OF MYCOTOXIN...
...NO WAY TO SURVIVE... HAD TO LET THE GHOSTWORKS DOWNLOAD ME INTO A NEW BODY.
SKAATE
ZERO COCHRANE'S CORPUS WAS LEFT BEHIND...
HE BECAME... THE GHOST RIDER!
SO! I GET IT NOW!
YOU CAME FOR THE JAR... TO RESTORE ZERO'S LIFE, IS THAT IT?

HANG ON!
I WISH I'D HAD THE CHANCE TO TRASH THIS PLACE THE LAST TIME THE X-MEN WERE HERE!
WHOA! THE PLACE ACTS IN SELF-DEFENSE!
THESE TENTACLES...
...WEAVE AND PULSE WITH A LIFE OF THEIR OWN...
...SLITHERING OVER MY BODY... BUT TAKING OVER MY MIND!
IT'S LIKE I FEEL THEM MASSAGING MY BRAIN... BRINGING BACK MY WORST NIGHTMARES... MY MOST TERRIFYING MEMORIES...
...LIKE THE DAY SERPENTINA DIED...
...KILLED BY JUNK-PILE...
THE POOR KID... SHE NEVER HAD A HOPE OF SURVIVING...
...LOSING HER CHANCE TO BE AN X-MAN...
...BEFORE WE EVEN GREW THE COURAGE TO CALL OURSELVES THAT!

AH! SO THAT'S IT! THE SPEED FREAK WANTS THE ARTIFACT TO BRING HIS VANILLA GIRLY-GIRLFRIEND BACK TO LIFE!
CONTRARY TO THEIR BELIEF, THEY HAVEN'T GOT IT YET.
HOLD STILL, YOU MISERABLE WRETCH! ONCE I'VE MY BRAND UPON YOU, YOU'LL BE MORE TRACTABLE!
YOU'LL BE ONE OF US!
"ONE OF US! ONE OF US!" YOU MEAN, A FREAK LIKE YOU?
I WOULDN'T JOIN ANY CLUB THAT WOULD HAVE ME AS A MEMBER, EXCEPT TO BEAT YOU OVER THE HEAD WITH IT!
BECOME A TEAM PLAYER?
I WOULD NOT, COULD NOT, ON A BOAT!
I WOULD NOT, COULD NOT, AS A GOAT!
THE JAR! HE'S MADE ME DROP IT!
RELAX! I'M ON THE CASE!

THE PLEASURES OF BEING--
--A GOAT-FOOTED GOD--
--WEAR AWFULLY THIN--
--AWFULLY FAST!
BUT ONCE I HIDE AND RECON-NOITER, I'LL MAKE A SECOND PASS AT GETTING THE ARTIFACT!
IT WILL BELONG TO ME!
GUESS AGAIN, CLOWN-FACE! THAT'S THE ALCHEMAX ARTIFACT 'ROUND YOUR NECK, ISN'T IT?
SAYS YOU! HEY, PUNISHER-GUY! HOW MUCH YOU WANNA BET THAT'S STOLEN PROPERTY?
'CAUSE WHATEVER, I'M SURE HE DIDN'T "URN" IT!
THE ARTIFACT MUST BE INCREDIBLY VALUABLE TO HAVE BROUGHT OUT ALL THESE FREAKS!
TOO BAD YA DON'T HAVE THE SHOES TO MATCH THAT BAG!
NO, NO, YOU IDIOT! THE URN IS MINE! MINE! IT WAS MINE ALL ALONG!

LET'S JUST SEE, SHALL WE?
NO! NO! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! NO ONE UNDERSTANDS!
THEY'RE MUTANTS, NOT "FREAKS"!
THAT'S NOT GOING TO DO YOU ANY GOOD!
I'LL BE THE JUDGE OF THAT!
IF THAT'S THE ARTIFACT DOOM STOLE FROM ALCHEMAX...
...IT'S WORTH REMAINS TO BE SEEN!
CREMAINS TO BE SEEN!
THAT WAS THE ASHES OF MY COLLEAGUES!
I'D HOPED TO REVIVE THEM... BUT THERE'S NO CHANCE OF THAT NOW, CRETIN!
THREE LOVELY CAPTIVES TO TORTURE...
...AND NOW THAT THE ARTIFACT IS SAFE WITH US... WE ADD ANOTHER TORTURER TO OUR NUMBER!
THE ALIEN WITHIN CAN RESTORE BUT ONE LIFE...
...A LIFE OF OUR CHOOSING!

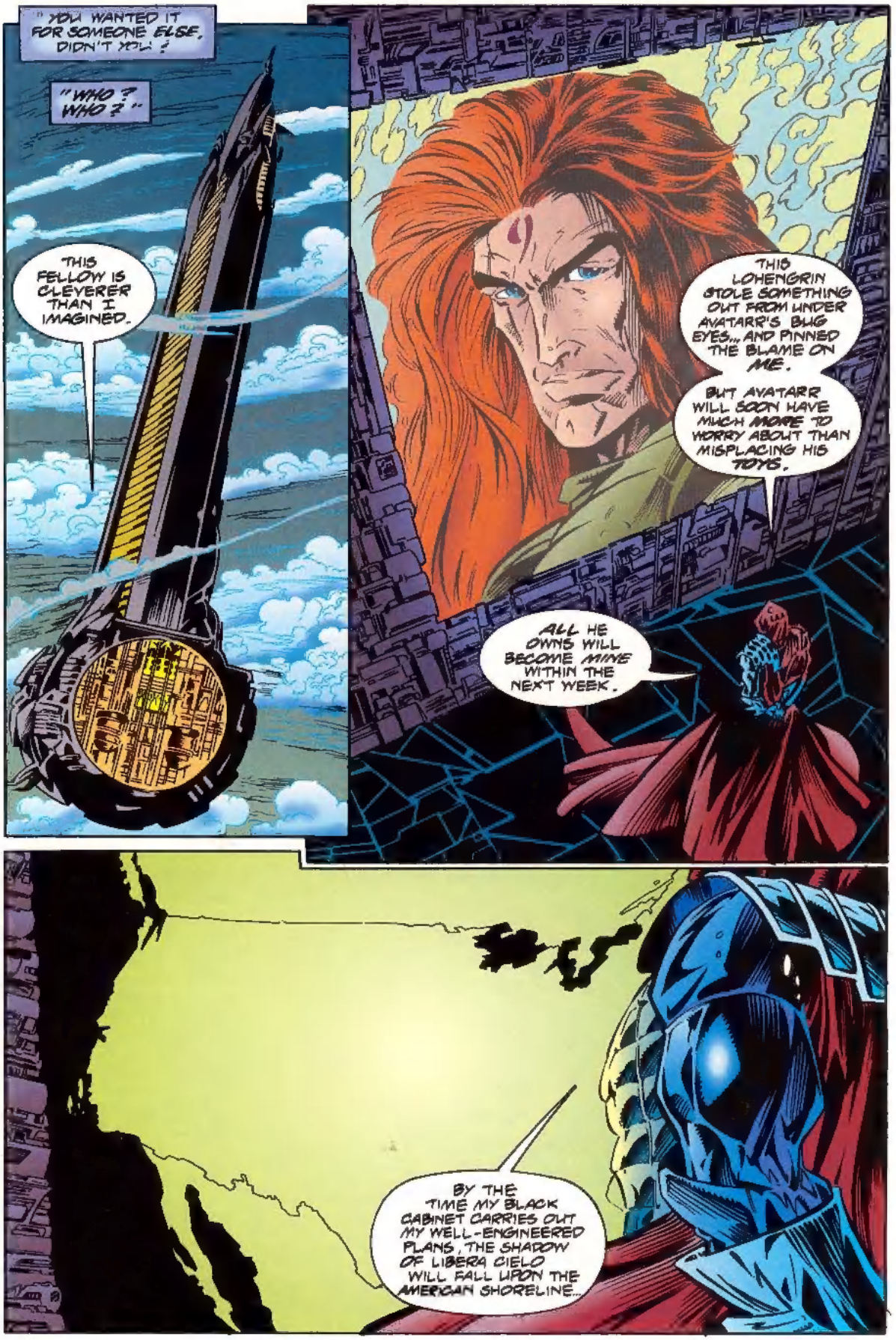
...THE FORM...
...OF THE LATE SADISTIC GENIUS OF THE THEATRE OF PAIN...
...WHOM WE HAVE MISSED SO DEARLY.
WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING...
...MISTRESS WINTRE!
I...I AM GRATEFUL TO BREATHE...TO MOVE...TO SPEAK AGAIN!
TO ONCE MORE EMBRACE LIFE AND ENGENDER PAIN IN OTHERS!
ARGH
KAPOW
YEAH, FOR ABOUT SIX SECONDS!
NEED I ADD THAT MARKS-MANSHIP HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PUBLIC EYE SPECIALTY.
NO! NO!
MY ONE AND ONLY CHANCE TO BRING MY SISTER BACK IS GONE!
CONSIDER IT THIS WAY... YOU'RE NOT LOSING A SISTER...

POW POW POW POW POW
...YOU'RE GAINING SCRAPS OF LEAD FIRED AT HIGH VELOCITY INTO YOUR BRAIN.
OR, AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT'S [redacted] AFTER I USE MY AMMO TO FREE YOUR VICTIMS!
I HATE TO DEPRIVE ANYBODY OF THE PLEASURE OF ASSASSINATIN THESE CLOWNS...
IF THOSE "TENTACLES" WERE ALIVE... THEY SURE AREN'T NOW!
...BUT I'VE BEEN ITCHING TO THROTTLE THE PHLEGM OUT OF THIS CREEP SINCE I GOT HERE.

SAVE SOME FOR ME!
ARE YOU KIDDING? YOU WANT TO STICK AROUND AND FIGHT AFTER THAT?
WHAT SAY WE COUNT OUR BLESSINGS WE'RE ALIVE... AND LET THESE YOKELS DO THE FIGHTING?
"WORK SMARTER, NOT HARDER," I SAY.
YECH! A BLIND DATE TO MAKE ME WISH I WAS!
SORRY, HON. THIS RELATIONSHIP WOULD NEVER WORK OUT!
I'VE GOT TALONS AND FANGS... YOU'VE GOT TALONS AND FANGS!
IT'D BE TOO COMPETITIVE!
AND I'VE BEEN SOME!
LET'S END THIS LITTLE TANGO.
OH, MAN? DIGESTING MY WEBBING?
THAT EVEN GROSSES ME OUT!
IF MEAN-STREAK HASN'T BUSTED ALL THE SELF-DEFENSE SYSTEMS IN THE JOINT...
...THEY SHOULD BE ACTIVE ...ABOUT NOW!
NO! NOOOOOO!
WHAT ARE YOU COMPLAINING ABOUT?
LOOK AT THE PART I GOT IN THIS! I GOT TO BEAT UP A GIRL.

THAT'S ONE WAY OF LOOKING AT IT.
ME, I'M A LOT OF THINGS...
...BUT I'M NOT A KILLER.
WE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH THESE MISANTHROPES.
GASP... WHEEZE... FREE!
FREE? NO, I DON'T THINK SO.
THE BIG GREEN GUY MAY NOT HAVE THE STOMACH FOR KILLING.
BUT I LOVE IT.
BKHOOM

WITHIN THE GHOSTWORKS...
YOU HAVE RETURNED, KENSHIRO COCHRANE!
WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT US?
A FIST FULLA BROKEN GLASS!
I DID WHAT I WAS TOLD! YOU "ORDERED" ME ON A MISSION TO GET THE JAR FOR YOU... AN' I BROUGHT IT BACK...
I JUST DIDN'T MAKE ANY PROMISES WHAT CONDITION IT'D BE IN!
AN' THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GONNA BE... WHENEVER YOU "ORDER" ME TO DO SOMETHING...
YOU'LL GET WHAT YOU WANTED... AND TO THE LETTER... BUT NOT ALWAYS THE WAY YOU HOPE... OR EXPECT.
WHAT DID YOU WANT THAT JAR FOR... IF IT WASN'T TO BRING ME BACK MY BODY?


"YOU WANTED IT FOR SOMEONE ELSE, DIDN'T YOU?"
"WHO? WHO?"
THIS FELLOW IS CLEVERER THAN I IMAGINED.
THIS LOHENGRIN STOLE SOMETHING OUT FROM UNDER AVATARR'S BUG EYES... AND PINNED THE BLAME ON ME.
BUT AVATARR WILL SOON HAVE MUCH MORE TO WORRY ABOUT THAN MISPLACING HIS TOYS.
ALL HE OWNS WILL BECOME MINE WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK.
BY THE TIME MY BLACK CABINET CARRIES OUT MY WELL-ENGINEERED PLANS, THE SHADOW OF LIBERA CIELO WILL FALL UPON THE AMERICAN SHORELINE...

...AND HIS WRETCHED LITTLE "EMPIRE" WILL MEAN AS MUCH AS A FISTFUL OF BROKEN GLASS.
I WOULD HAVE HAD THAT ARTIFACT... IF ONLY FOR FORTUNE.
NO MATTER. I HAVE SOMETHING ELSE FOR HER. SHE WILL RULE MY HOMELAND IN MY UPCOMING ABSENCE.
SHE LOVES MY LAND, MY LATVERIA... AND WILL SHEPHERD IT WELL... DESPITE HER PERFIDY.
WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT... HER COUNSEL MEANS *MUCH* TO ME. ALTHOUGH THE DAY MAY COME WHEREIN HER COUNSEL WILL NO LONGER BE MINE, I CANNOT NOW IMAGINE MYSELF WITHOUT IT.
ODDLY, HER CONCERNS HAVE BECOME *MY* CONCERNS.
YES, I WOULD HAVE LIKED TO HAVE OBTAINED THE JAR... IF ONLY TO BRING BACK POET FOR HER.
POET WAS A GOOD AND RESOURCEFUL SOLDIER... ONE WHO WILL BE MISSED DURING MY AMERICAN CAMPAIGN.
I KNOW THAT FORTUNE FEELS THAT HE WAS UNFAIRLY TAKEN FROM HER...
SHE MUST REALIZE THAT *EVERYTHING* IS FAIR...
...IN *LOVE*... AND IN *WAR*.
IF ONE THING BECOMES APPARENT IN THE MONTHS AHEAD...
...IT IS *THIS*...
DOOM, BETTER THAN ANY MAN, KNOWS *WAR!*

OUT OF MY HEAD

Now, what did we want to go and pull the rug out from everything for? We had this hot little universe cookin' here, a set of interlocking comics that everybody liked just fine until we started messing with them. What's the big idea?

Idea is, we had some fun for the past coupla dozen issues of our books, getting everything set up, making cool people and cool places to put 'em in: Lotusland, Libera Cielo, Las Vegas and Latveria 2099, and like that. Yeah, the map sure has grown. Now it's time for the borders on the map to shift.

Hey, why not? You think the map of Eastern Europe in 1995 looks the same as 1985? How about what Dan Rather keeps calling "the former Soviet Union"? I'll bet your old man has an old textbook in the attic displaying what the continent of Africa looked like when he was a kid. Look at said continent today.

We've got about a hundred people on our chessboard. Don't you think it's time for them to move?

Bob Dylan said, "People don't have much food on their table, but they gotta lotta forks and knives, and they gotta cut something'." Well, sure, give them the means and the motive, and they'll welcome the first opportunity. Doom has more silverware than anybody on the planet (heck, he's tightly wrapped in a sardine can!), so it makes sense that he'd wanna cut himself a great big ol' slice with everything on it.

Time to update the 2099 Almanac.

This entry into the future of the future has been brought to you by some fine folks who deserve thanks here: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, whose work graces the cover, as well as Angus McKie who computer colored their work far beyond anything we might've thought possible. Marc Campos is suddenly working all over the lot: we're glad he took time out to pencil this especially long story. It's a thankless task, accurately depicting nearly our entire assembled cast. And not just the usual fine contingent of obstreperous attitude cases we call heroes and villains, but new ones like Septymbre and Lohengrin. Oh, and once more, I'm indebted to he celebrated Mr. K for his patience and forbearance.

Anything I forgot? Oh, yeah...write. We'll print your letters in some of our other 2099 mags.

On with the show.

MYTHOS IS FAIR
A Stan Lee Presentation
I HAVE MY BLACK CABINET FOR SUPPORT AND SOLACE.
WE NETSLIDERS CAN DEAL WITH THE CORPORATE AND FINANCIAL PYRAMIDS OF LOTUSLAND...
...BUT DEALING WITH THE HULK? THAT'S LIKE TRYING TO E-MAIL GODZILLA!
INDIGO ESHUN.
SHARP BLUE.
THEY'RE NOTHING IF NOT GEOGRAPHICALLY DISTRIBUTED: THAT THOSE X-MEN MUTANTS ARE IN THE SOUTH-WEST... AND GHOST RIDER IN TRANSVERSE CITY...
...BUT NO MANIFESTATIONS WE MUST DEAL WITH RIGHT AWAY OUR APPROACH TO WASHINGTON.
GROWTH UNCHECKED DEREGULATION LEADS TO NORTHEASTERN CYBER-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. THUS ALCHEMAX.
WIRE.
NKRUMAH.
FORTUNE.
...AND THE NORTHEAST IS TRUE RANDOM FACTOR SPIDER-MAN. SPIDER-MAN--
--DOES WHATEVER A SPIDER CAN.
I WONDER... IS THEIR COUNCIL AND COMBINED POWER ENOUGH?
THERE ARE FORCES I MISS... FORCES I MIGHT WISH TO ADD TO THEIR NUMBER.
MORPHINE GOMERS.
ARE YOU ABOUT TO MAKE ANOTHER TIRESOME REFERENCE TO THAT BOGGARED PACK OF DEPICTIONS OF MEDIEVAL TORTURES AND MOUNTEBANKS, ALL DRESSED UP IN LEOTARDS TO CUT CAPERS WITH A HEY-NONNY-NONNY?
PLEASE. JUST THIS ONCE. SPARE US.
THE CONFLUENCE OF RANDOM FACTORS ON OUR UNDERTAKING CANNOT BE DENIED.
WE IGNORE THE SIGNS ON THE ROAD AT OUR PERIL.